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PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Under Secretary of State Sarah Sewall Meets Nigerian Officials in Abuja

United States Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Aminu Wali, Minister of Defense Aliyu Gusau, other senior Nigerian government officials, civil society, and key stakeholders on counterterrorism, elections, and human rights issues during a previously planned visit to Abuja May 12-13. Under Secretary Sewall's visit coincided with the arrival of an interdisciplinary U.S. government advisory team that traveled to Nigeria, at the request of the Nigerian government and in coordination with international partners, to provide technical and investigatory advice.

Under Secretary Sewall underscored U.S. commitment to supporting the Nigerian government's efforts to find more than 200 missing young women who were kidnapped April 14-15 in Chibok, Borno State, and return them to their families. She emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to combatting violent extremism, building law enforcement capability, protecting civilians, and respecting human rights. Under Secretary Sewall further noted that a key focus of the U.S.-Nigerian bilateral relationship is combatting violent extremist groups and building law enforcement capacity while protecting civilians and strengthening respect for human rights.

Boko Haram, which has claimed responsibility for kidnapping the young women and continues to pose a significant threat to regional peace and security, was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the United States in November 2013. In 2014, more than 1,000 people were murdered in attacks attributed to Boko Haram on schools, churches, and mosques. Since 2013, the State Department's Rewards for Justice Program has advertised a reward offer of up to \$7 million for information leading to the location of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekaru.

Since May 1, Nigerians have organized public demonstrations around the country, as well as a social media campaign with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, calling for the girls' release. On May 9, Under Secretary Sewall called the Principal of the school from which the girls were kidnapped to express outrage and deep concern about this deplorable incident. She met with individuals and activists affected by the kidnappings while in Abuja.

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Relevant information about U.S. policies and programs in Nigeria can be found on our website: <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>.

